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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI.

MASTER OF KUNG FU



RAID
ON
SAMISDAT'S
ISLAND!



ZECK-PAY

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my **father** did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father: that my name means 'The Rising and Advancing of a Spirit,' and that my body could be forged into a living weapon through the discipline of kung fu. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on Earth... and that to **honor** him would bring nothing but **dishonor** to the spirit of my **name**."

Stan Lee PRESENTS: MASTER OF KUNG FU!®

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

THE SAMISDAT SECRET!

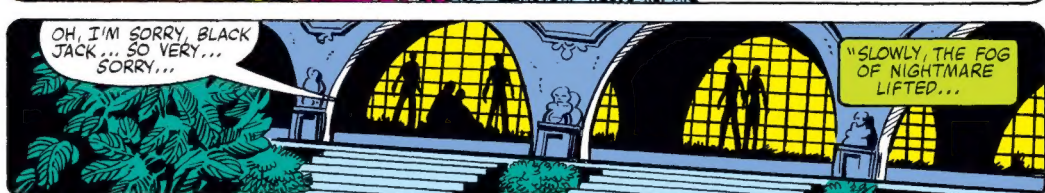
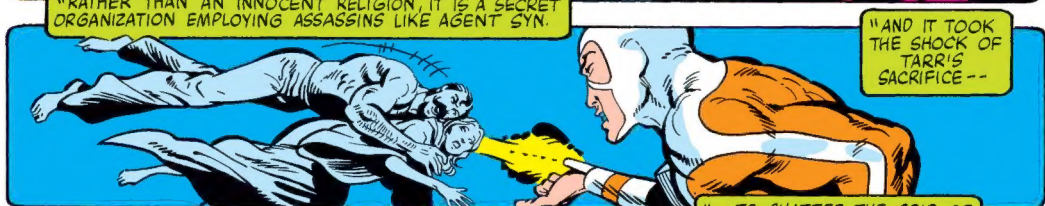
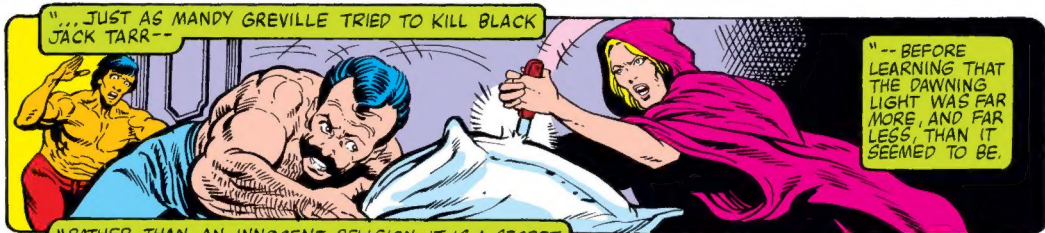
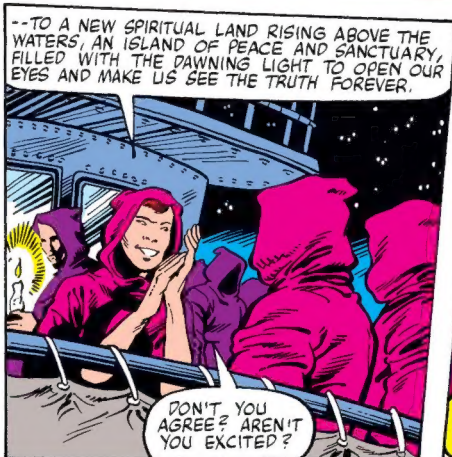
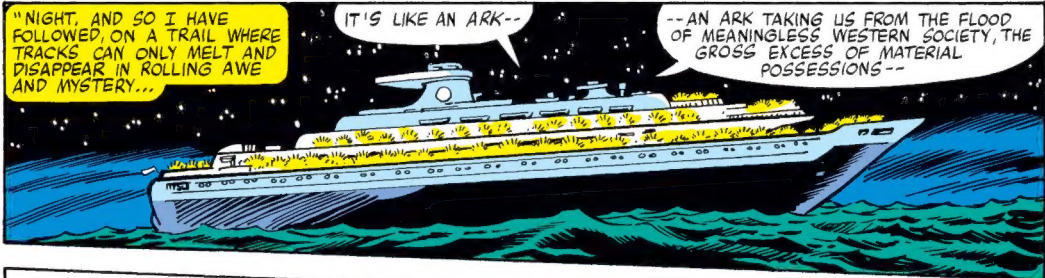
"MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH NAYLAND SMITH'S NEWLY FORMED 'FREELANCE RESTORATIONS' ORGANIZATION HAS APPARENTLY ENDED WITH THE DEATH OF A BIZARRE KGB ASSASSIN NAMED AGENT SYN."

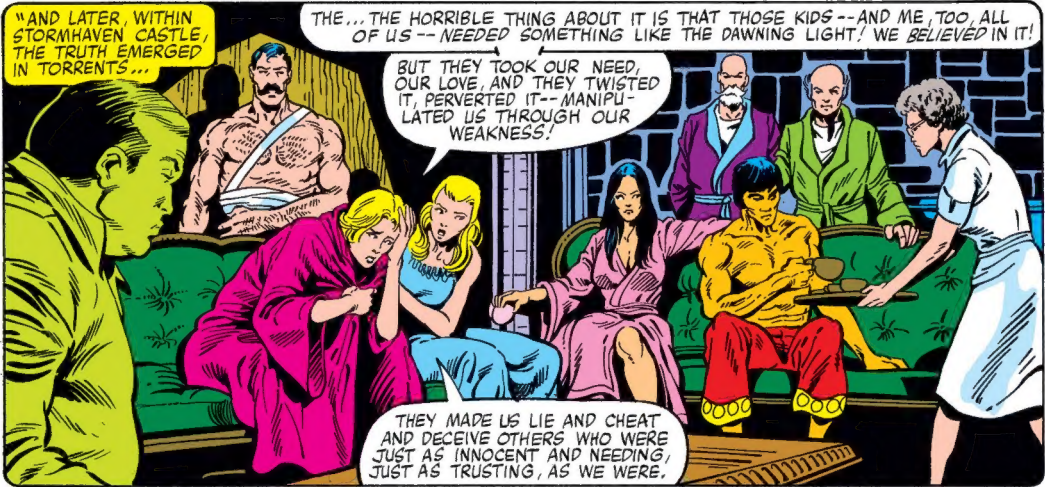
"AND YET THERE IS SOMETHING OMINOUSLY INCOMPLETE ABOUT THE MATTER, CONJURING AN IMAGE OF FRESH TRACKS IN AN EMPTY FIELD OF SNOW... TRACKS WHICH SUDDENLY HALT IN MID-STRIDE, UNDER AN OPEN SKY OF NOTHINGNESS."

"I SENSE SOMETHING STILL SECRET, SOMETHING UNFINISHED AND HIDING AHEAD, WAITING FOR ME TO FOLLOW..."



DOUG MOENCH / WRITER | MIKE ZECK & GENE DAY / ARTISTS | JIM NOVAK / LETTERER | BOB SHAREN / COLORIST | JIM SALICRUP / EDITOR | JIM SHOOTER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



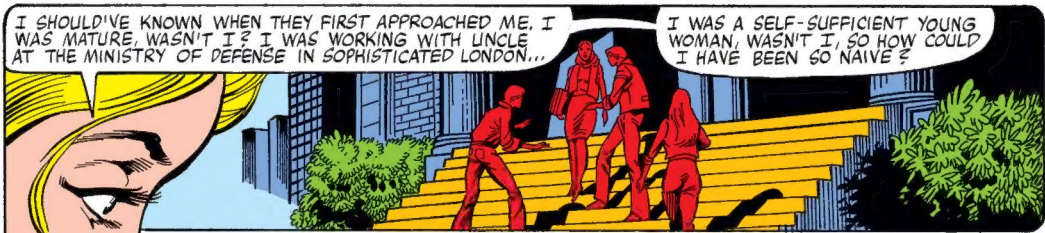


"AND LATER, WITHIN STORMHAVEN CASTLE, THE TRUTH EMERGED IN TORRENTS ..."

THE... THE HORRIBLE THING ABOUT IT IS THAT THOSE KIDS --AND ME, TOO, ALL OF US -- NEEDED SOMETHING LIKE THE DAWNING LIGHT! WE BELIEVED IN IT!

BUT THEY TOOK OUR NEED, OUR LOVE, AND THEY TWISTED IT, PERVERTED IT-- MANIPULATED US THROUGH OUR WEAKNESS!

THEY MADE US LIE AND CHEAT AND DECEIVE OTHERS WHO WERE JUST AS INNOCENT AND NEEDING, JUST AS TRUSTING, AS WE WERE.



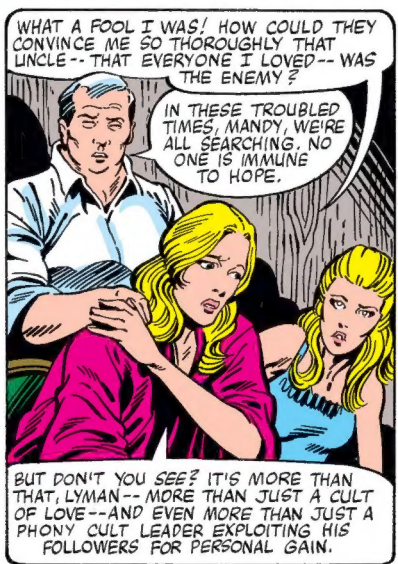
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN WHEN THEY FIRST APPROACHED ME. I WAS MATURE, WASN'T I? I WAS WORKING WITH UNCLE AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IN SOPHISTICATED LONDON...

I WAS A SELF-SUFFICIENT YOUNG WOMAN, WASN'T I, SO HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO NAIVE?



AND IF I DIDN'T KNOW THEN, THERE WAS NO EXCUSE LATER... WHEN THEY CONVINCED ME TO STEAL THOSE DOCUMENTS DETAILING THE BRITISH- WEST GERMAN WEAPONS SHIPMENT!

ONLY SAMISDAT IS HOLY ENOUGH TO SEE THE REAL SCORE, MANDY.



WHAT A FOOL I WAS! HOW COULD THEY CONVINCE ME SO THOROUGHLY THAT UNCLE-- THAT EVERYONE I LOVED-- WAS THE ENEMY?

IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES, MANDY, WE'RE ALL SEARCHING. NO ONE IS IMMUNE TO HOPE.

BUT DON'T YOU SEE? IT'S MORE THAN THAT, LYMAN-- MORE THAN JUST A CULT OF LOVE--AND EVEN MORE THAN JUST A PHONY CULT LEADER EXPLOITING HIS FOLLOWERS FOR PERSONAL GAIN.

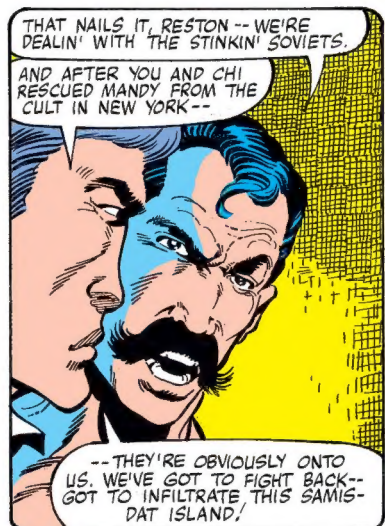
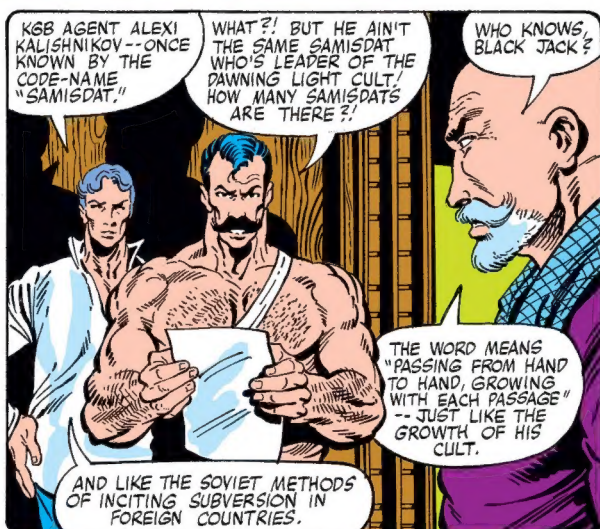
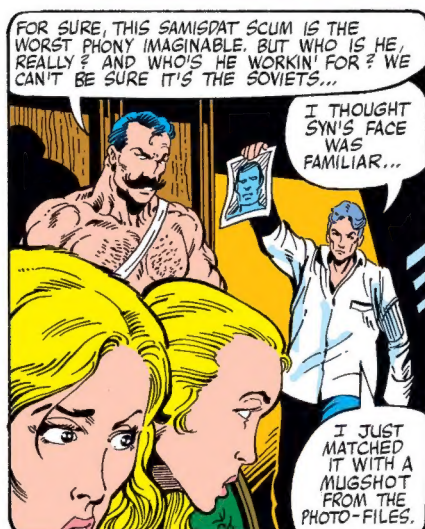


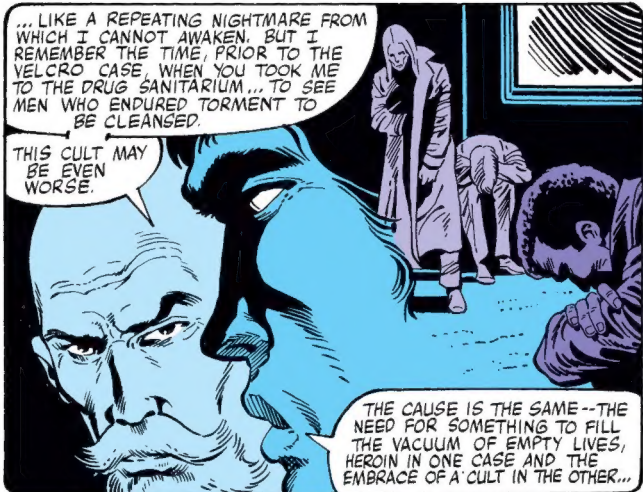
THE FINAL TRUTH IS THAT SAMIS-DAT AND HIS DAWNING LIGHT ARE A FRONT FOR SOMEONE TRYING TO INCITE CHAOS AND SUBVERSION IN THE WEST! AND NEXT WEEK, IT'S ALL COMING TO A HEAD!

CULT MEMBERS FROM BRITAIN, THE STATES AND EUROPE ARE ALL GOING TO BE TAKEN ABOARD A SHIP BOUND FOR "SAMISDAT ISLAND" SOMEWHERE IN THE CARIBBEAN.



AND THEY DON'T REALIZE--! THEY THINK IT'S A MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR TO THE PROMISED LAND OF SPIRITUAL MILK AND HONEY-- WHERE THEY'LL FINALLY MEET THE REVERED SAMISDAT HIMSELF!





...LIKE A REPEATING NIGHTMARE FROM WHICH I CANNOT AWAKEN. BUT I REMEMBER THE TIME, PRIOR TO THE VELCRO CASE, WHEN YOU TOOK ME TO THE DRUG SANITARIUM... TO SEE MEN WHO ENDURED TORTMENT TO BE CLEANSED.

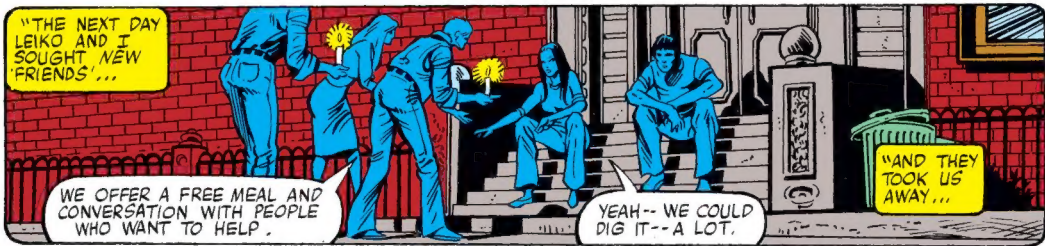
THIS CULT MAY BE EVEN WORSE.

THE CAUSE IS THE SAME--THE NEED FOR SOMETHING TO FILL THE VACUUM OF EMPTY LIVES, HEROIN IN ONE CASE AND THE EMBRACE OF A CULT IN THE OTHER...



BUT THOSE WHO WOULD SUPPLY THAT NEED WITH THE FALSE CURE OF A CULT'S LOVE ARE PERHAPS EVEN WORSE THAN DRUG MERCHANTS, LIKE VELCRO. SO... YES, SMITH, FOR THIS TIME AT LEAST... I WILL JOIN YOU TO STOP SAMISDAT... ALL THE SAMISDATS.

"AND MY DECISION ECHOED, LIKE THE PLAINTIVE VOICE OF AN OLD FRIEND, ON THE MIDNIGHT WIND..."

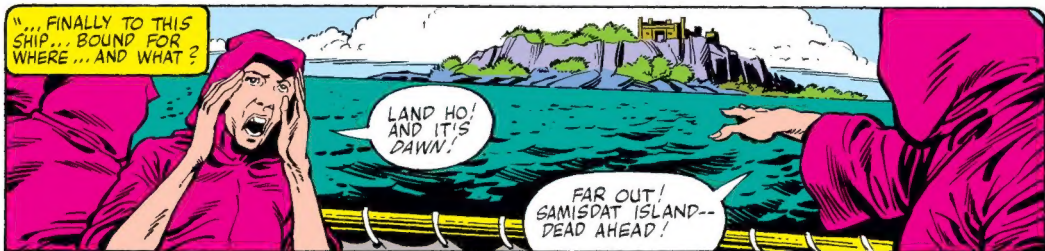


"THE NEXT DAY LEIKO AND I SOUGHT NEW 'FRIENDS'..."

WE OFFER A FREE MEAL AND CONVERSATION WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT TO HELP.

YEAH-- WE COULD DIG IT-- A LOT.

"AND THEY TOOK US AWAY..."



"... FINALLY TO THIS SHIP... BOUND FOR WHERE... AND WHAT?"

LAND HO! AND IT'S DAWN!

FAR OUT! SAMISDAT ISLAND-- DEAD AHEAD!



"WE ARE GREETED ON THE SHORE, IN SWeltering HEAT, BY OTHERS SUFFERING IN THE SAME ROBES..."

WELCOME TO THE SOURCE OF THE LIGHT.

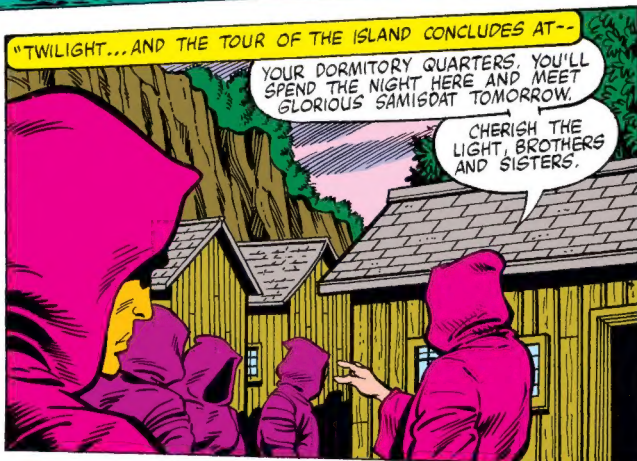
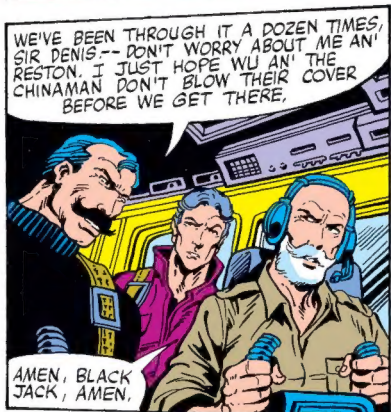
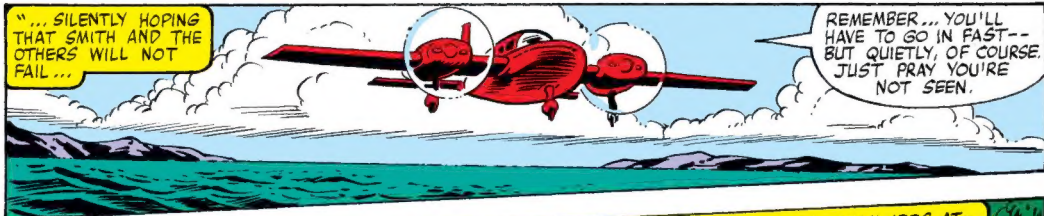
WELCOME TO THE HOME OF SAMISDAT.

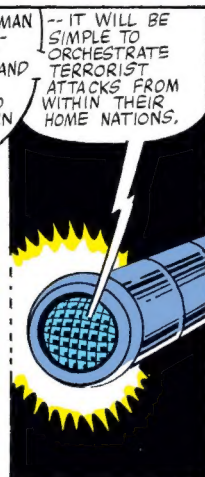
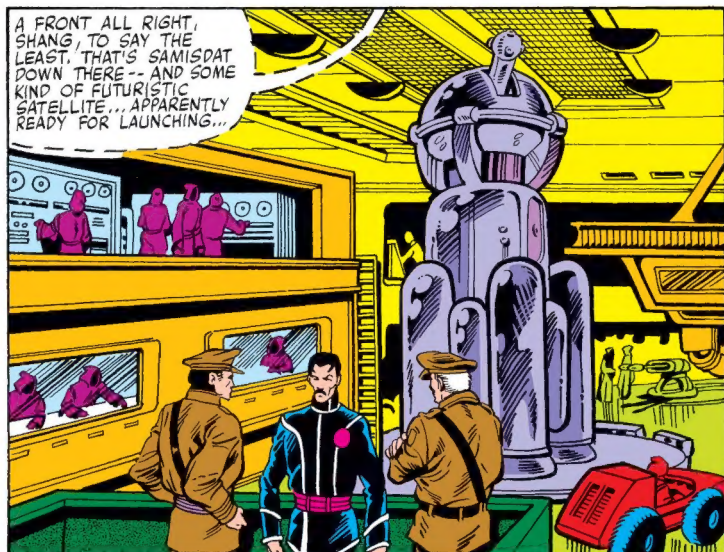


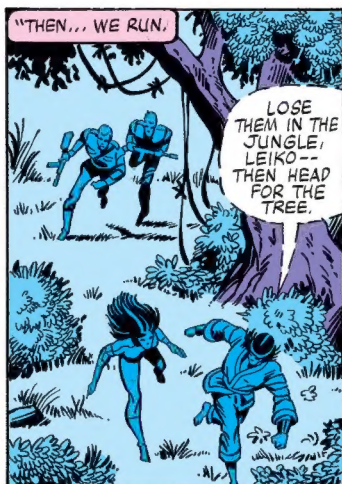
"DURING THE TOUR, OUR GUIDES INANELY PRAISE BUT NEVER STOP TO APPRECIATE THE NATURAL WONDERS..."

SEE THE WATER-FALL? SAMISDAT HAS CONSIDERED TURNING IT INTO A WATER-RISE!

"THEIR MINDS ARE WELL BEYOND FOCUS. LEIKO AND I TOUCH EYES..."







"THE CREAK OF THE DOOR, AND SOFT SILVER MOONLIGHT..."



"BOOTED STEPS, THE CLACK OF WEAPONS..."



"THEN A LONG AND HEAVY SILENCE, AND FINALLY..."



"...MY HEARTBEAT SLOWS IN CHERISHED DARKNESS..."



QUITE AN UNDERGROUND COMPLEX YOU HAVE HERE, SAMISDAT.



INDEED, COMRADES. BUT BEFORE YOU RETURN TO MOSCOW, I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW YOU THE LATEST RESULT OF MY SECRET WEAPONRY DEVELOPMENT CENTER... SOMETHING WHICH, IN THE LONG RUN, MAY PROVE EVEN MORE VALUABLE THAN THE SATELLITE...

I INTRODUCE TO YOU, COMRADES, THE SYN VARIANTS. THE ORIGINAL AGENT SYN WAS LOST IN SCOTLAND-- BUT TO REPLACE HIM I HAVE SELECTED FIVE PRIME AGENTS--



--EACH WITH EXCELLENT PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILES ENHANCED BY THE MOST ADVANCED INDOCTRINATION TECHNIQUES.



FURTHERMORE, EACH BOASTS IMPROVED VARIATIONS ON THE BASIC AGENT SYN DESIGN. THEY ARE LIVING, BREATHING ENGINES OF DESTRUCTION, THE PERFECT KILLING MACHINES, AND THEY WILL --

SAMISDAT! THERE ARE TWO INFILTRATORS ON THE ISLAND--ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN. THEY SEEMED TO BE CHINESE, BUT IN THE DARK--



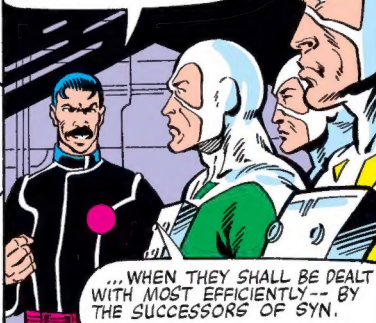
THEY ARE CHINESE--

SHANG-CHI, NO DOUBT, AND PROBABLY LEIKO WU! THEY'RE THE ONES RESPONSIBLE FOR AGENT SYN-PRIME'S FAILURE... AND NOW THEY'VE TRACKED ME HERE.

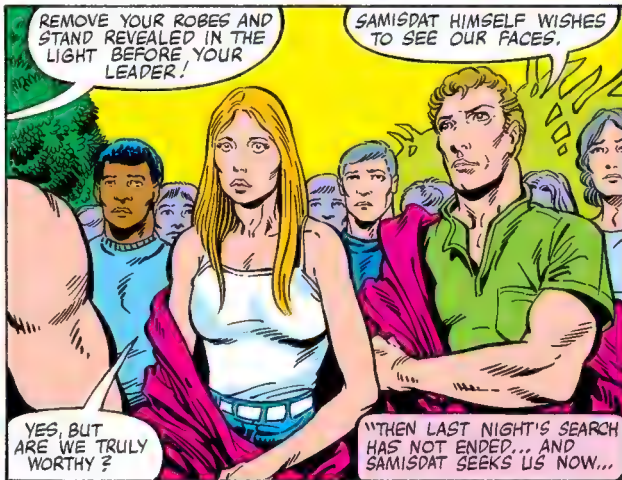
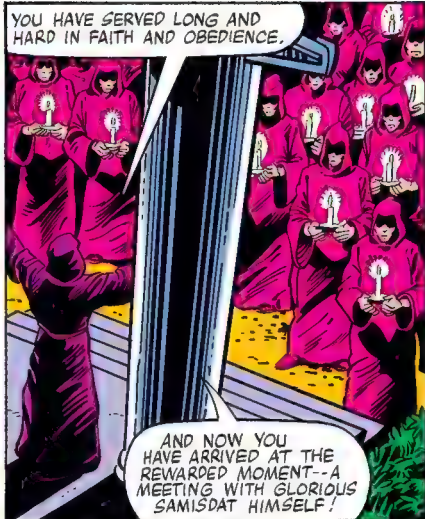


SEND A SEARCH PARTY TO COMB THE ENTIRE ISLAND.

BUT DON'T WORRY IF YOU FAIL TO FIND THEM TONIGHT... FOR I SHALL EXPOSE THEM TOMORROW...



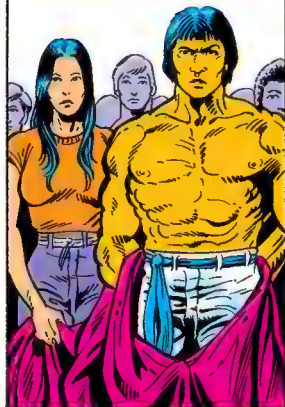
...WHEN THEY SHALL BE DEALT WITH MOST EFFICIENTLY-- BY THE SUCCESSORS OF SYN.



"ALL THE OTHERS HAVE DIS-
ROBED. WE CAN HESITATE NO
LONGER. A WISE DECISION,
THEN, TO CHANGE OUR
CLOTHES DURING THE NIGHT..."



"... BUT WILL THE DECISION
SERVE THE PURPOSE OF
DISGUISE?"



"NO."



"YOU TWO-- THE
CHINESE-- COME
FORWARD. I WANT
TO SEE YOU MORE
CLEARLY."

"UH-OH
AGAIN."

"EASY,
LEIKO..."

"WE STAND FAST, SEARCHING THE MASS OF SURROUND-
ING BODIES FOR THE EASIEST ROUTE OF ESCAPE.
IT TAKES TOO LONG..."

"SEIZE THEM! THEY'RE SPIES! OBEY
YOUR LEADER! OBEY SAMISDAT--
TAKE THEM!"

"LEFT,
LEIKO--
FAST!"



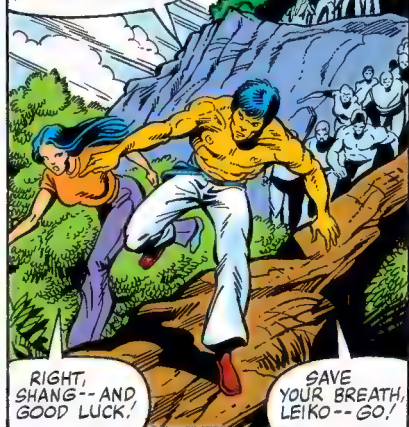
"STOP THEM! I HAD A FEELING THIS WOULDN'T BE
OUR DAY WHEN BLACK JACK AND CLIVE
DIDN'T SHOW UP LAST NIGHT..."

"THE ISLAND WAS
FARTHER THAN WE
EXPECTED, LEIKO."



"THEY'LL BE
HERE SOON."

"PERHAPS THEY'RE HERE
NOW! SPLIT UP AND
SEARCH FOR THEM
IN THE JUNGLE!"



"RIGHT,
SHANG-- AND
GOOD LUCK!"

"SAVE
YOUR BREATH,
LEIKO-- GO!"

"SHANG'S RIGHT / I'LL NEED
EVERYTHING MY LUNGS CAN
GIVE ME TO OUTFRAN ALL
THOSE CULTISTS!"

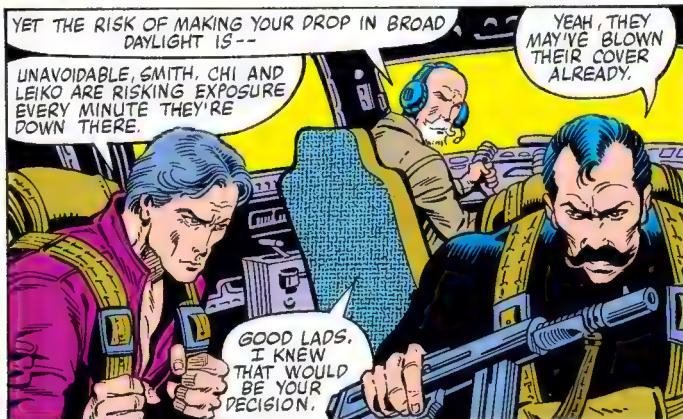
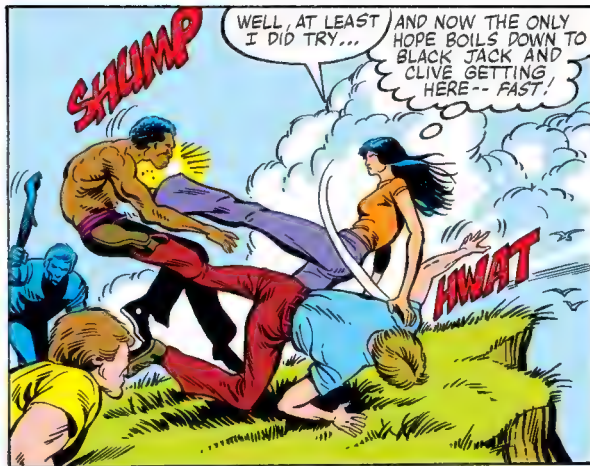


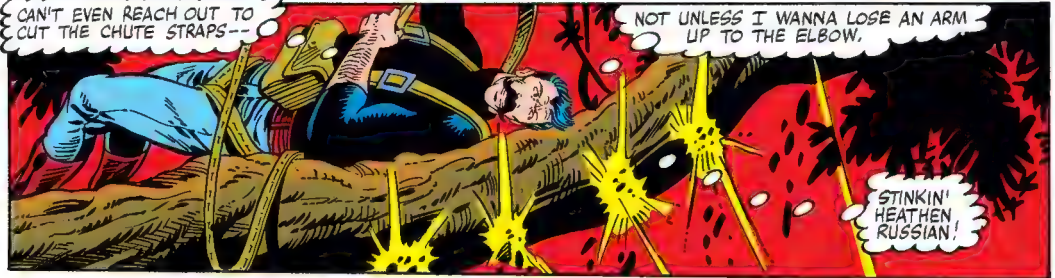
"JUST HOPE
THIS PATH
DOESN'T LEAD TO--"

"IT DOES. A
DEAD-END."

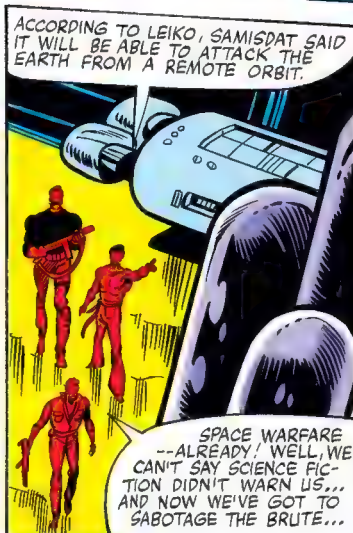
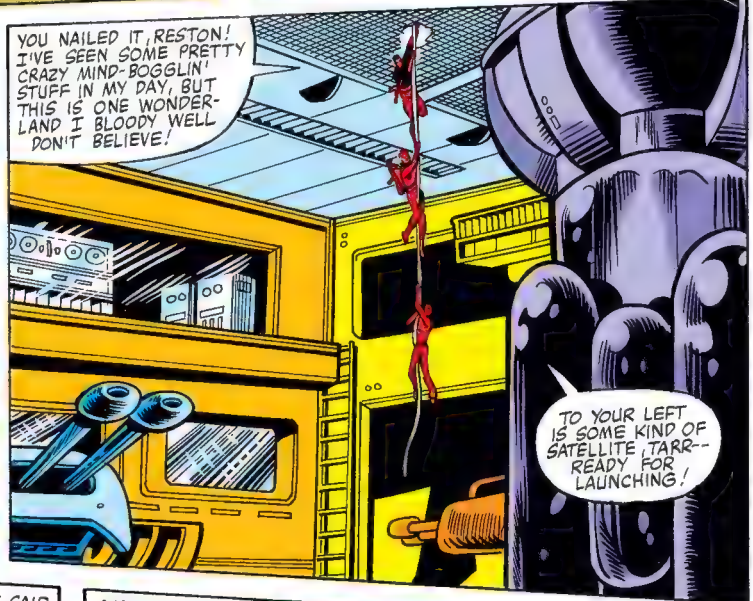
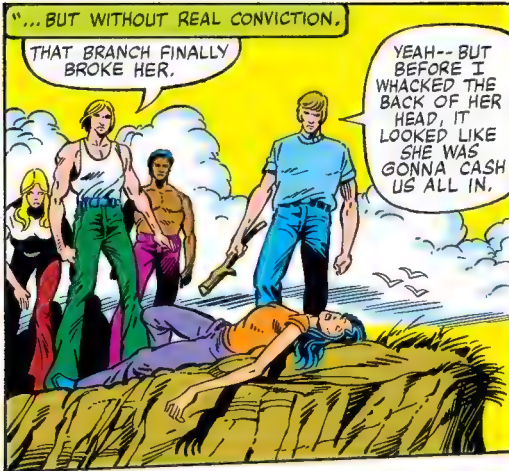


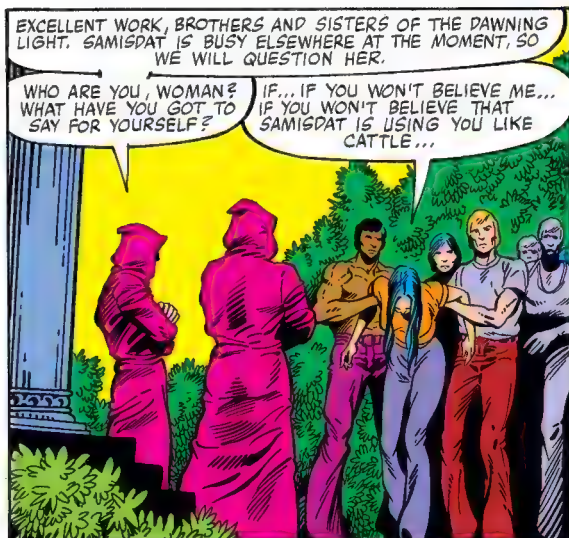
"NO CHANCE TO GET
AWAY NOW! NOTHING
TO DO BUT TRY THE
IMPOSSIBLE...
REASONING WITH
THEM."











EXCELLENT WORK, BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE DAWNING LIGHT. SAMISDAT IS BUSY ELSEWHERE AT THE MOMENT, SO WE WILL QUESTION HER.

WHO ARE YOU, WOMAN? WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?

IF... IF YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME... IF YOU WON'T BELIEVE THAT SAMISDAT IS USING YOU LIKE CATTLE...



... THEN I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE YOU SEE THE REAL LIGHT -- BY LEADING YOU STRAIGHT TO THE TRUTH!

BESIDES, DEAD AHEAD IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN GO NOW!

HOW'D SHE DO THAT?!

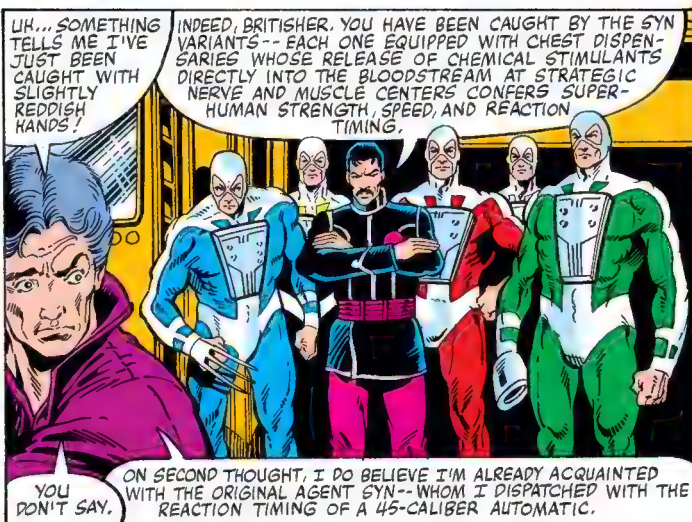
NEVER MIND-- AFTER HER!



RESTON, I TOLD YA TO --

YEAH, YEAH, ALMOST DONE NOW, BUT --

HALT!

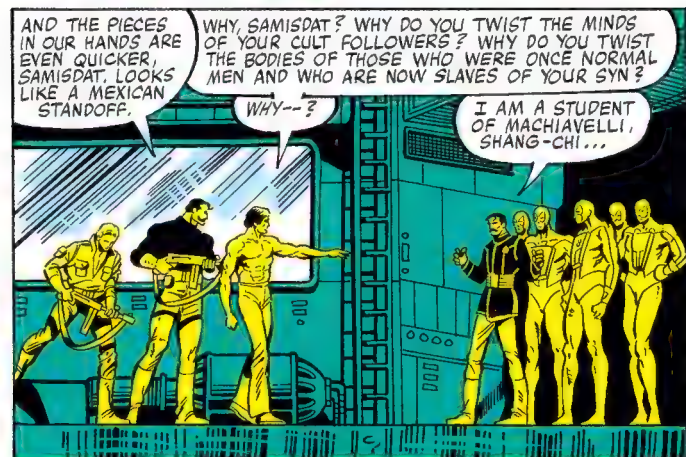


UH... SOMETHING TELLS ME I'VE JUST BEEN CAUGHT WITH SLIGHTLY REDDISH HANDS!

INDEED, BRITISHER. YOU HAVE BEEN CAUGHT BY THE SYN VARIANTS -- EACH ONE EQUIPPED WITH CHEST DISPENSARIES WHOSE RELEASE OF CHEMICAL STIMULANTS DIRECTLY INTO THE BLOODSTREAM AT STRATEGIC NERVE AND MUSCLE CENTERS CONFERES SUPER-HUMAN STRENGTH, SPEED, AND REACTION TIMING.

YOU DON'T SAY.

ON SECOND THOUGHT, I DO BELIEVE I'M ALREADY ACQUAINTED WITH THE ORIGINAL AGENT SYN -- WHOM I DISPATCHED WITH THE REACTION TIMING OF A 45-CALIBER AUTOMATIC.

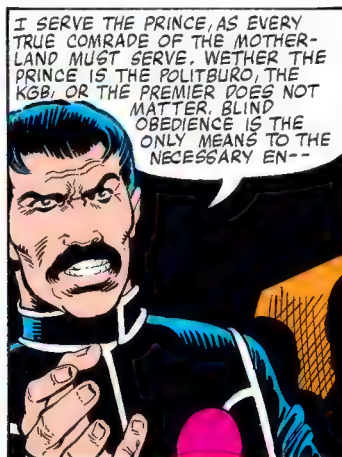


AND THE PIECES IN OUR HANDS ARE EVEN QUICKER, SAMISDAT. LOOKS LIKE A MEXICAN STANDOFF.

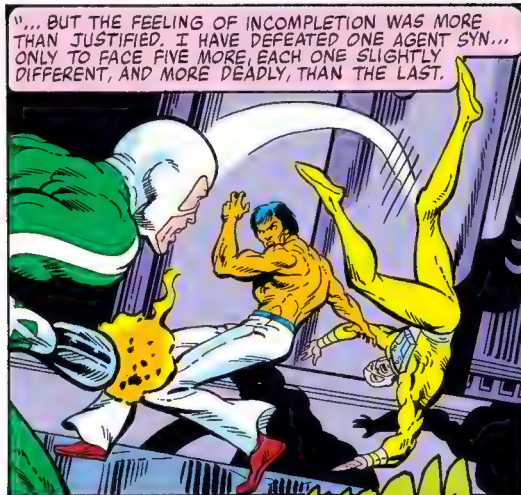
WHY, SAMISDAT? WHY DO YOU TWIST THE MINDS OF YOUR CULT FOLLOWERS? WHY DO YOU TWIST THE BODIES OF THOSE WHO WERE ONCE NORMAL MEN AND WHO ARE NOW SLAVES OF YOUR SYN?

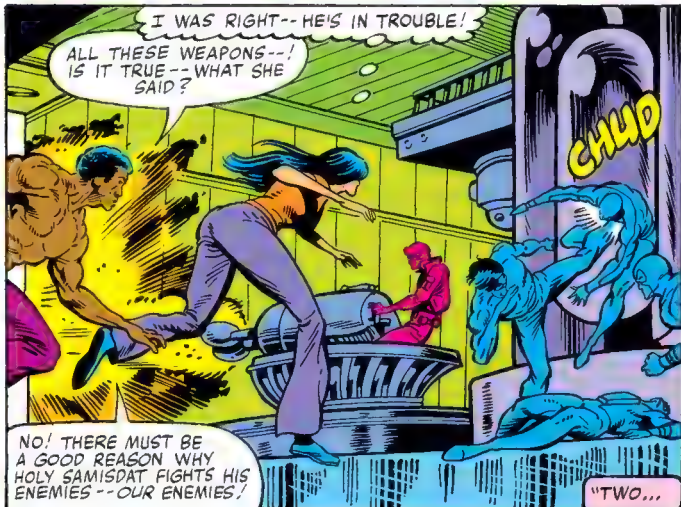
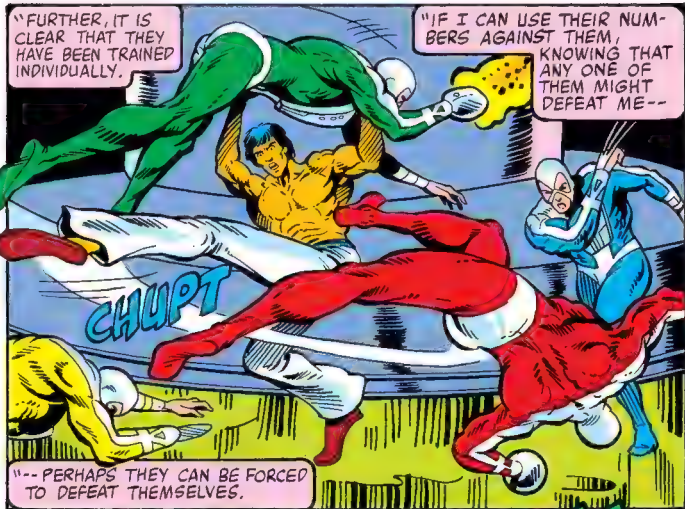
WHY--?

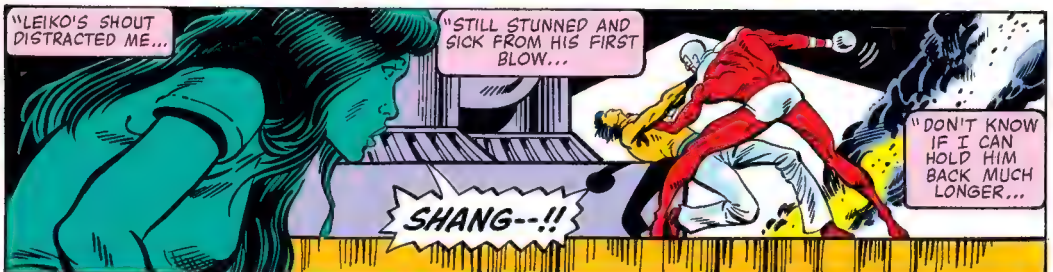
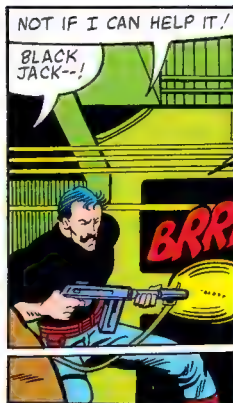
I AM A STUDENT OF MACHIAVELLI, SHANG-CHI...

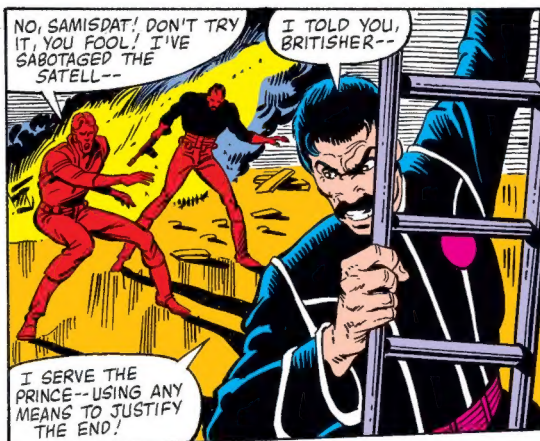


I SERVE THE PRINCE, AS EVERY TRUE COMRADE OF THE MOTHERLAND MUST SERVE. WHETHER THE PRINCE IS THE POLITBURO, THE KGB, OR THE PREMIER DOES NOT MATTER. BLIND OBEDIENCE IS THE ONLY MEANS TO THE NECESSARY EN--









"OUTSIDE, THE ISLAND QUAKES AND BUCKLES UNDER OUR FEET, AS IF REBELLING AGAINST OUR TRACKS. A GREAT ROAR HURLS SEARING HEAT AT OUR BACKS..."

OVER HERE!
GET BEHIND
COVER--
FAST!

WHAT
DID YA
DO TO
THE
BLOODY
THING
ANYWAY,
RESTON?!

DISCONNECTED THE
GYROS-- SMASHED
THE STABILIZERS--
FORCED A BLEED IN
THE BACKUP FUEL
IGNITION...

"IF IT'S LUCKY--"

"AND THEN, WHO
KNOWS?"

"BUT THE END
RESULT WILL
BE THE SAME--"

"--MORE OR
LESS SPEC-
TACULARLY..."

"--IT'LL WOBBLE
A COUPLE
HUNDRED FEET
UP INTO THE AIR..."

"IT MIGHT
DO
ANYTHING."

"EVENTUALLY IT'LL
SELF-DESTRUCT,
BUT IN THE MEAN-
TIME IT MIGHT
SWALLOW HALF
THE ISLAND IN ITS
DEATH-THROES."

"THE MANSION DISINTEGRATES...
FROM THE BOTTOM UP..."



"...WHILE SAMISDAT REACHES EVER HIGHER FOR THE SKY..."

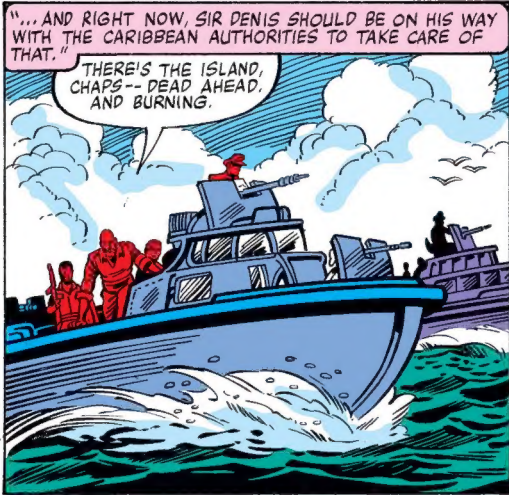


"...ONLY TO FALL, AS RESTON PREDICTED, IN A RAIN OF FIRE."



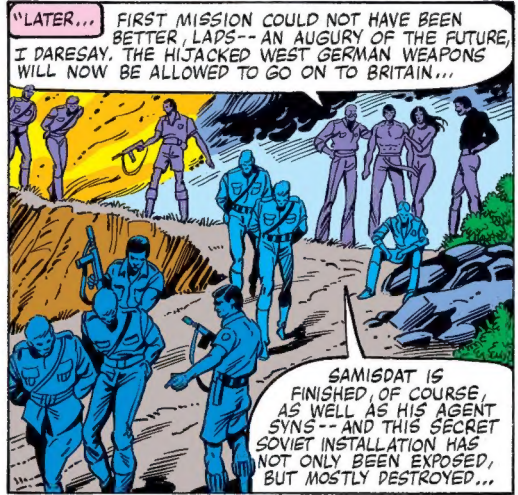
"WE WATCH, OUR EYES REFLECTING THE GLITTER OF A THOUSAND FLAMING SHARDS. WHERE, AMONG THEM, ARE THE PIECES OF SAMISDAT'S SOUL?"

"WELL, THAT JUST ABOUT DOES IT, I GUESS... EXCEPT FOR THE MOP-UP..."



"...AND RIGHT NOW, SIR DENIS SHOULD BE ON HIS WAY WITH THE CARIBBEAN AUTHORITIES TO TAKE CARE OF THAT."

"THERE'S THE ISLAND, CHAPS-- DEAD AHEAD, AND BURNING."



"LATER... FIRST MISSION COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER, LADS-- AN AUGURY OF THE FUTURE, I DARESAY. THE HIJACKED WEST GERMAN WEAPONS WILL NOW BE ALLOWED TO GO ON TO BRITAIN..."

"SAMISDAT IS FINISHED, OF COURSE, AS WELL AS HIS AGENT SYNS-- AND THIS SECRET SOVIET INSTALLATION HAS NOT ONLY BEEN EXPOSED, BUT MOSTLY DESTROYED..."



"AND THE CULT?"

"THEY'VE BEEN TOLD THE TRUTH BY THE ONES WHO CHASED ME--AND WERE ALMOST KILLED. THE ONES WHO WEREN'T THERE STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT... BUT THEY'LL COME OUT OF THEIR DAZE..."

"AND THEN--?"



"AND THEN, CHI, THEY'LL START LOOKING FOR SOMETHING NEW. SOME MAY TURN TO DRUGS, MAYBE SOME TO LIQUOR, AND PROBABLY OTHERS TO DIFFERENT GURUS..."

"AND MAYBE, SHANG, JUST MAYBE, IF THEY'RE VERY, VERY LUCKY... A FEW OF THEM WILL TURN TO THEMSELVES."

NEXT:
CARTER'S SUPER MIDNIGHT!

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR
BOB BUDIANSKY
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Marvel Readers,

With all their super powers, Spider-Man and the rest of the Marvel gang are powerless against diseases like polio, measles, and rubella. These diseases can cripple or even kill. But, they can also be easily prevented with painless vaccinations. In most States (including New York), it's the law: NO SHOTS, NO SCHOOL! For more information on immunization, call the Immunization Hotline at (212) 349-2664. Outside New York City, call your local Health Department.

Stay Healthy!

Carol Bellamy
President
New York City Council

And it behooves everyone reading this to take her advice to heart and make sure you've had your vaccinations — and that your younger brothers and sisters have likewise. We can't stress this enough, really. There's no excuse for not having your shots — not in this day and age. One, two, three and it's over... painless and permanent protection against those diseases. Think about it.

Dear Doug:

First of all, let me say that a few months ago, when the then-knighted Sir Anthony Blunt (the Queen's own art advisor, for Pete's sake!) was exposed as a Soviet spy who had been protected for years by Parliament, the Prime Minister, and the British political elite, my first reaction was to quietly murmur, "Games of deceit and death." The phrase just *works*, Doug; it is perhaps the best, truest, and saddest observation on the ways of the West ever to appear in MOKF — and there have been some good ones...

And shortly after Blunt was revealed, I took the opportunity to read *The Fourth Man* by Andrew Boyle, the book that forced Mrs. Thatcher to expose Blunt. A loaded gun, it is; it out-Grahams Greene and out-Johns Le Carre. And suddenly, for me at least, it seems entirely plausible that Fah Lo Suee could indeed wind up as the de facto head of MI-...a storyline I can hardly wait for.

Now on to the meat of the letter: Once I had MOKF #89 in hand, I went back and reread every issue in the series since #77, where the current storyline more or less began. Now, twelve issues later (and, I might add, I can't even conceive of reading *three*, much less a dozen, consecutive issues of any other comic currently published), I'm ready for my annual in-depth review. (I've limited myself to one letter of comment a year, and this book is suffering through it for the third year in a row...)

Doug, I am just stunned by how much careful *convergence* of ideas and images and characters and themes is accomplished in MOKF. Which is nothing new in comics; it's been tried before, but by immature, if brilliant, writers. Their images were too obvious, the characters were shockingly self-enclosed and reacted badly, and the themes and ideas came in spurts and converged seemingly by accident. Scattershot scripting, to be sure, but these are only comics, and noble failures can be absolved if they are at least fun to read. But MOKF has not so much as stumbled in any of these respects since your "new direction" in #71. Indeed, the sophistication of the characterization, the consistency of the images (water, phantasms/holograms, and pyramids especially), the meshing of ideas and plot and the use of *both* as character motivation, and, above all, the delicate sure-footed *balance* of all the above — well, it's just amazing. And it's no secret that I suffer from a deep disillusionment with comics today — no one cares anymore, it seems. But it's also no secret that the only book I buy is MOKF. And people ask — why?

I'll tell you why: Because it is the exception to the rule. It is a joyous aberration. It is there to delight those of us who read critically, whose joy comes from a consistency of reality so fluid in its tone and so solid in its depiction that bits of Sherlock Holmes, 007, and "Casablanca" can be tossed in without harm, hinting at a larger universe beyond the book even if, for the moment, it is one which is irrelevant to the story at hand.

Here, look at #89, the best example yet of the thematic continuity found in the book. How many other comicbook series even *attempt* thematic continuity? Here we see Shang-Chi's second life-and-death confrontation with Fu Manchu and in all aspects (physically, emotionally, symbolically) it echoes the first. Once again Shang-Chi must face the horror of fighting his "brothers" in #50 it was Shaka Kharn, and in this issue the three biological abominations. Both were created by Fu Manchu; both were held as trumps in last-ditch efforts to stop Shang-Chi. And both times, the psychological block nearly caused Shang-Chi defeat.

The confrontations were similar too, both staged in the crystal severity of moving spacecraft. The first time around, Shang-Chi was confused and ambivalent. Should he kill his

father? This time he acted on hard determination, seeking to do the unthinkable. Further, the first time around Fu Manchu spirals off into the abyss of space (long before Darth Vader) apparently to his doom, but in this second uglier confrontation, in which both he and his son admit there is no honor, the craft plunges downward instead of "upward" to its evident destruction.

In this kind of book it is impossible to say "I liked the first Fu Manchu war better than the second," or vice-versa. The series is not a chain of selected episodes; it is a logical progression of characters and events, with disarmingly effective retreats and U-turns and changes of mind. The first Fu Manchu multi-part set the stage for the second, which is contingent upon the first, and the two will converge in the third if there is one. Convergence, accumulation, that's the name of the game. Nothing is lost; everything interrelates. Really — it's sheer joy to read.

As for Mike Zeck and Gene Day, my admiration for them is still riding high. As story-tellers, they're first rate; and the only greater joy than good solid storytelling is wild experimentation, which the two gents attempt with a self-assurance guaranteeing success. They do beautiful stuff together.

I've tried to confine myself to generalities in this letter, with a few specific comments on #89, but the seven-part epic is not only excellent as a whole, but soaringly lyrical even in its ugliest aspects. Is it art? I don't know. Fandom at large seems to feel that "art" consists of Neal Adams stock poses and fractured storytelling. For me, however, MASTER OF KUNG FU #s 77-89 goes well beyond that and comes darn near close to art.

Bob Rodi
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Doug and Mike:

Yup, you were right. "Triumphs of the Flesh" in MOKF #90 was certainly "unexpected," and it never even came *close* to giving me them mean ole Post-Opus Letdown Blues. What this new direction did, strangely enough, was send me strolling down memory lane...

The fight scene *really* took me back. Remember how Ditko and Romita would get crazy in SPIDER-MAN, drawing two or three pages of the wall-crawler in torrid action? Remember how the only thing Stan would add to these pages was sound effects? That's what the fight scene in this issue of MOKF reminded me of, and I enjoyed every panel of it. Zeck and Day did an outstanding job; Jim Novak's sound effects were good; and you, Doug, picked the perfect device to frame the conflict — a bit of understated Shang-Chi humor.

The "Don't Walk" debate between Shang-Chi and the police officer also reminded me of the early days. Remember Englehart and Starlin's "Midnight Brings Dark Death"? Remember the confrontation with the cop in that story — and how Shang-Chi suffered the unjustified verbal abuse in silence? That was when passivity in all forms seemed an integral part of his nature. Now, in "Triumphs of the Flesh," Chi shows he is perfectly willing to stand up to *any* authority figure when necessary. The juxtaposition of these two scenes clearly illustrates one of the ways in which Chi has grown and matured.

The opening of this tale reminded me of a time not too long ago. Remember the way it used to be between Shang-Chi and Sir Denis? Remember the fondness, the mutual admiration? Well, with Fu Manchu apparently dead at the beginning of this issue, I envisioned the cast discussing the possibility of Fu's survival, which would lead Chi and Smith to realize that their reactions to the possibility were very similar, creating in turn a certain amount of renewed respect between the two. Obviously, that scene was nowhere to be found in this issue. Instead, you skipped the post-mortems and divorced Chi and Leiko from the others. The "goodbye sequence" was a strong scene, expertly crafted, and a much better scene than the one I anticipated. The two panels emphasizing the special relationship between "The Bull" and "The Dragon" were particularly moving, possessing more emotional punch than whole *issues* of most other comics.

So, while MOKF #90 may have jogged my memory in a lot of little ways, there's no doubt that the course of this book and its wonderful characters is full steam ahead into the future.

Bruce Canwell
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A quick but sincere thanks to Bob and Bruce — and a similar appeal to the rest of you for your presence here next issue, when "Carter's Super Midnight" introduces a brand-new character to the cast... and we definitely do not mean Jimmy. See you then.

—Doug Moench